

## THE SMALL WORK OF ART

The criteria for the competition to be included in this exhibit were not about the typical issues of *medium*, *subject*, or *theme*, but rather *SIZE*. All works in the **Magnitude SEVEN** exhibit are no larger than seven inches. Not surprisingly, this limitation has not limited the creative range, which distinguishes these thirty works so dramatically.

## THE VARIETY OF CONTENT and MEANING ARTISTS SPEAK TO YOU THROUGH THEIR WORK



Gretchen Scharnagl describes her work, **Interrupted Migration**, as “a series [which] consists of intimate collages using digital inkjet photographs of dead birds.” These migratory birds were killed due to human constructions and lights obstructing their path and confusing their flight instincts. Scharnagl says that this artistic rendering and documentation of bird death is meant to do three things:

- To be an environmentalist statement
- To work as “a metaphor for any life cut short, or any interruption of a journey”
- And to be a beautiful image

Does any one of these three themes seem more important than the other two?

It is important to compare your own interpretation of the work with the intention of the artist. Perhaps your impression is completely different from those stated above. But it is also important to try to understand what the artist is saying to you through their art. Do you see how Gretchen Scharnagl's ideas are working here?

List two or three things you think *Interrupted Migration* might mean, in addition to the three themes defined by the artist.



## SHARING PERSONAL SPACE THE TELLING OF SECRETS



Kate Smith, an artist from England, says that her drawing entitled **Pinch** reveals her interest in “drawing as a form of contact - investigating the relationship between gesture, mark and imprint.”

The attention to physical mark-making and the the possibilities of drawing for being expressive suggest a deliberate intimacy between the work and the artist, and eventually, between the work and **you** the viewer.

Does this work make you feel like you're learning a secret? Does it make you feel included into the artist's special creative realm?

Smith's content focuses on formal qualities and aesthetics as opposed to the social commentary offered by Scharnagl. Do you feel more attracted to 'activist art' with particular messages, or to works which function on a more personal level?

So far we have discussed only two-dimensional works, but the variety and importance of small sculptures in *Magnitude SEVEN* is impossible to overlook.

## OBJECTS IN SPACE MYSTERIOUS COMBINATIONS



Tom Mueske is a graduate student in San Francisco. His piece *Throwback* is made out of insulation foam, which is an unusual material for artwork.

*Throwback* is a great example of abstraction and minimalism. Mueske has created a very small and simple organic shape reminiscent of a sprouted bean or a strange hatching cocoon. The artist has used subtle bumps and knobs to keep it from appearing machine made, giving it an organic quality.

Notice how the hooked end is the same length as the cylindrical portion. This choice of proportion gives the work *balance*.

The three colors are anything but organic or plant-like, but they too maintain a different kind of balance because of the way they consistently cover the sculpture in three equally spaced areas. They provide a geometric three-part structure to the work, which complements its organic shape.

### DISCOVERY!

Do you recognize the combination of these colors? They are very much like the colors on the striped flag of the country of Germany.

Do you think this similarity to the colors of the flag is an accident? If not, what do you think the artist is trying to say with this combination of colors and shape?

Do you feel these different elements (the organic vs. the equal divisions) create interest in the piece by revealing a contrast, or do they seem mismatched and poorly paired? Does seeing the relationship to the flag of a European country change your interpretation of the work? Does it make it more interesting?



### CONSIDER THIS

Now that we have discussed three very different works in *Magnitude SEVEN*, look back through the exhibit (or look at the images in the exhibit catalog on the Internet at <http://www.manifestgallery.org/manifestpress/Manifest13.sample.pdf>). How do you think about the artwork differently now? What new ideas, or meanings, do you find hidden in the works by these eighteen artists? Do you see anything new?

Looking through all the artwork in this exhibit, try to find three different works that have new meaning for you now.

After all, small works can hide many big meanings!